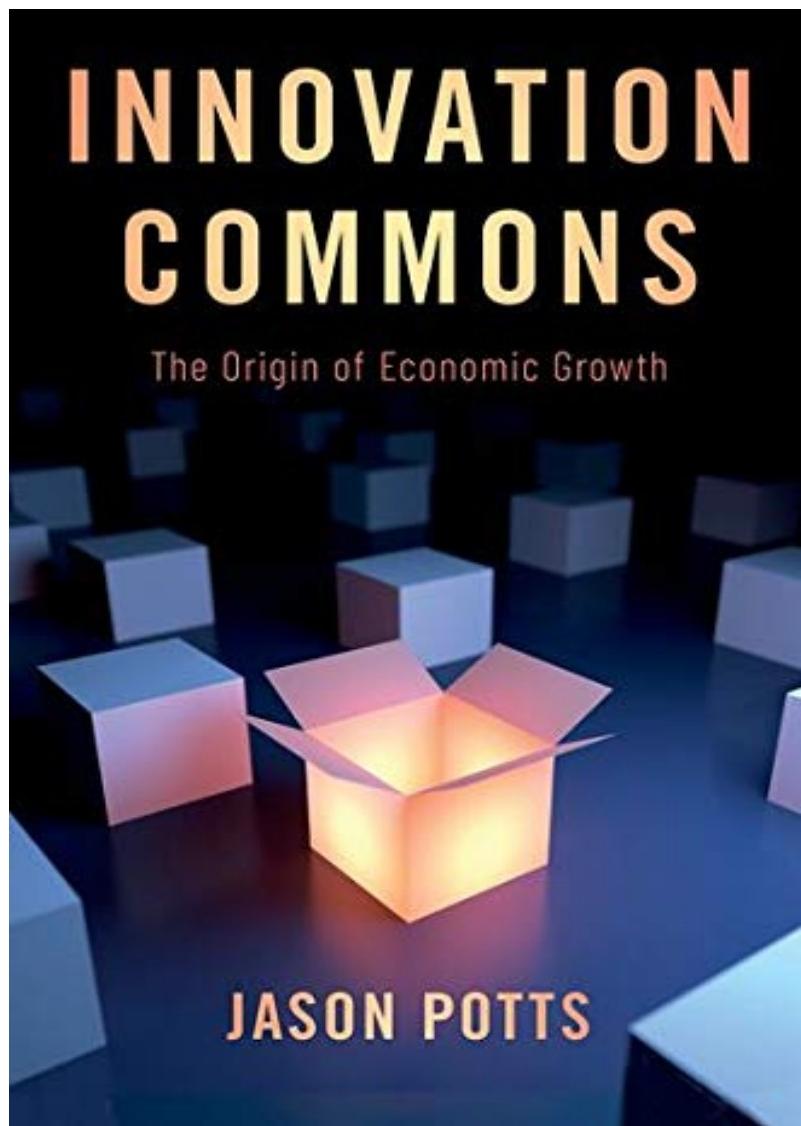


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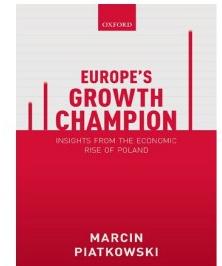


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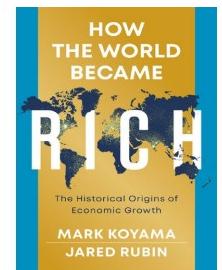
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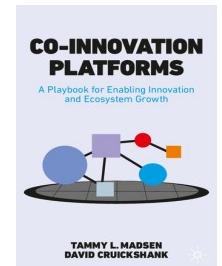
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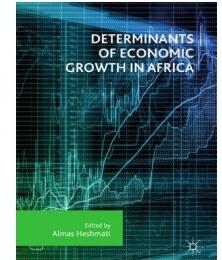
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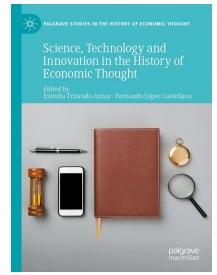
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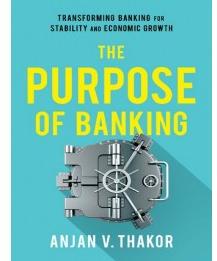
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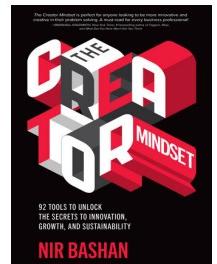
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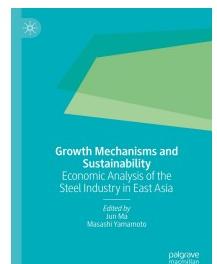
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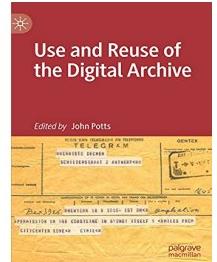
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right out of house and home, then I have read the history of speculations in Wall Street to little purpose."

Uncle Dick laughed until the cabin rang again.

"But the idea of the Rocky Mountains being only a hundred miles from New York," said Frank.

"I didn't tell him so," answered Archie, quickly. "I said that they were at least that distance away; and so they are. I had to make my statements correspond with Eugene's, didn't I? Just before that he had been telling Fowler that the whole of America was about as large as Ireland—"

"Hold on," interrupted Eugene. "Didn't I tell him that it was fully as large as Ireland?"

"That's a fact," said Archie, accepting the correction; "so you did. Well, now, the United States and the British possessions in America cover about six million square miles, and of these the Rocky Mountains cover nine hundred and eighty thousand, or nearly one-sixth of the surface of the whole country. When I came to build my mountains, I had to build them in proportion to the size of the country they were supposed to stand in, didn't I?"

Uncle Dick roared again.

"When Fowler began to question me on distances I had to be careful what I said," continued Archie. "When he asked me how big the Rocky Mountains were, I told him that they covered at least five thousand square miles, and you ought to have seen him open his eyes. He said he had no idea that there was room enough in America for any such mountains. Now, since Ireland contains thirty-three thousand square miles, I think my proportion was a pretty good one. If you can come any closer to it in round numbers, I'd like to see you do it."

Frank could not combat such arguments as these, so he went to his room and tumbled into bed.

CHAPTER VII. MORE ABOUT THE CLERK.

The week following the one on which the Stranger was hauled into the dry-docks, found the Club settled on a sheep-farm a few miles in the interior, the guests of Uncle Dick's friend and fellow-miner, Mr. Wilbur. If we should say that they enjoyed their liberty, their target shots, and horseback rides, we should be putting it very mildly. The change from their cramped quarters on board the schooner to the freedom of the country was a most agreeable one, and they made the most of it. They were almost constantly on the move, and there was not a station (in California it would have been called a ranche) for miles around that they did not visit, or a piece of woods that they did not explore.

It was while they remained here that the novel trial of speed which Archie had proposed came off. It was no novelty to Uncle Dick and Mr. Wilbur, who declared that the trapper was certain to prove the winner, but it was a new thing to the old members of the Club, who could not bring themselves to believe that a man could beat a horse in a fair race, until they had seen it with their own eyes. The arrangements were made one rainy day, when there was nothing else the Club could do except to sit in the house, and sing songs, and tell stories, and the next morning was set apart for the trial.

Eugene being allowed his choice of all the horses on the station, selected Mr. Wilbur's own favorite riding nag, which had the reputation of being able to run a quarter of a mile in less time than any other horse on the island. After the arrangements had all been made, Archie noticed, with some uneasiness, that Mr. Wilbur and

Eugene held frequent and earnest consultations, which they brought to a close whenever he came within earshot of them; and when the storm cleared away, just before night, he saw the horse, against which the trapper was to run, brought out and put through his paces. Mr. Wilbur had explained to Eugene that the place where the horse would lose the race would be at the turning-point. He would, beyond a doubt, run the hundred yards before the trapper could; but in stopping and turning he would lose ground, and Dick would be half way home before he could get under way again. Eugene thought he could remedy that by giving his horse a little practice beforehand, and the result of his experiment encouraged him greatly. The intelligent animal seemed to enter into the spirit of the matter with as much eagerness as his rider did, and after he had passed over the course a few times, he would stop on reaching the turning-point, wheel like a flash, and set out on the homestretch at the top of his speed; and he would do it, too, without a word from Eugene.

Archie, from his post on the veranda, witnessed the whole proceeding, and when it was concluded and the horse was led back to the stable, he hurried off to find the trapper. To his surprise Dick did not seem to be at all uneasy over what he had to tell him. "Never mind, leetle 'un," said the trapper. "Sposen I should tell you that I had beat a hoss that had been practiced that way for a hul week, what would you say?"

"I should say that you had done it," replied Archie.

"Wal, I have, and more'n onct, too."

The next morning, at five o'clock, the Club, and Mr. Wilbur and all his herdsmen, were on the ground, and the arrangements for the race had all been completed. If Eugene had been about to ride for his life, he could not have made greater preparations. He had discarded his hat and boots, tied a handkerchief around his head to keep the hair out of his eyes, and rode in his shirt-sleeves, and without a saddle. Dick simply pulled off his hunting shirt, and tightened his belt.

"I want a flying start," said Eugene.

"Well, I am sorry to say so, but you can't have it," answered Archie, who acted as master of ceremonies.

"Why, a man can get under way twice while a horse is getting started once," said Eugene.

"That isn't my fault, or the man's either," returned Archie. "It's the horse's."

"Give him the flyin' start," said Dick Lewis.

Uncle Dick and Mr. Wilbur were surprised to hear this, and the latter told his companion in a whisper that the trapper must have the greatest confidence in his speed, or he would not be willing to give the horse so much of a chance.

Eugene rode back twenty yards from the starting-point, the trapper took his stand by his side, and when both were ready they moved off together, Archie giving the signal to "go" as they passed the starting-point. Before the word had fairly left his lips the trapper was flying down the course like an arrow from a bow. He succeeded in getting a fine start, but, after all, it was not so great as everybody thought it would be. Eugene was on the alert, and so was his horse. The animal made one or two slow bounds after he passed the starting-point, and then he settled down to his work, and went at the top of his speed, Eugene lying close along his neck, and digging his heels into his side at every jump. The horse came up with and passed the trapper just before the latter reached the end of the course, and remembering his training of the day before, made an effort to stop and wheel quickly; but so great was his speed that he went some distance farther on, and when he did face about, Eugene saw that it was too late to win the race. The fleet-footed trapper was half-way home; and although the horse quickly responded to his rider's encouraging yells, Dick won the race very easily. The Club were satisfied now. One thing was certain, and that was, they had never dreamed that a human being was capable of such speed as the trapper had exhibited that morning.

"If he were not a good runner he wouldn't be here now," said Archie, in reply to their exclamations of wonder. "His lightness of foot has saved his scalp, I suppose, a score of times. He says he never was beaten."

The boys did not doubt it at all. They were now prepared to accept without question anything that Frank and Archie might tell them concerning the trapper.

In a very few days the Club had seen everything of interest there was to be seen about the station, and Uncle Dick's proposition to take a run over to Australia was hailed with delight. They went by steamer from Hobart Town to Melbourne, and during the next three weeks had ample opportunity to gain some idea of what the settlers meant when they talked of life in the bush. They first explored every nook and corner of the city of Melbourne, spent a few days in the mines where Uncle Dick had worked during the gold excitement, and finally camped on another sheep station, where they made their headquarters as long as they remained in Australia. Archie did not succeed in shooting a kangaroo, but his horse was stolen from him by the bushrangers, and the Club spent a week in trying to recover it. The animal was never seen again, however, and it took all Archie's pocket-money, and a good share of Frank's, to make the loss good when they reached Melbourne; for that was the place where the horses had been hired.

At length a letter from Uncle Dick's agent in Hobart Town brought the information that the repairs on the schooner were rapidly approaching completion, and that she would be ready to sail in a few days. As he had promised to spend one more week with his friend, Mr. Wilbur, before he started for Natal, the captain ordered an immediate return to Tasmania, and in due time the Club found themselves once more under the sheep-herder's hospitable roof. We must not forget to say, however, that they stopped two days in Hobart Town, for it was while they were there that an incident happened which had something to do with what afterward befell two of the members of the Club.

On the morning after their arrival, Uncle Dick and some of the boys went down to the docks to see how the schooner was getting on, and the rest sauntered off somewhere, leaving Frank in the reading-room of the hotel, deeply interested in a newspaper. Shortly after the others had gone, he was interrupted in his reading by a slap on the shoulder, and upon looking up he saw the consul's clerk standing beside him.

"Aw! I'm overjoyed to see you again," exclaimed Fowler, extending the forefinger of his right hand. (The reader will understand that we shall hereafter write down this young gentleman's words as he ought

to have spoken them, not as he did speak them.) “I have been out to Wilbur’s twice—he is a friend of mine, you know—and I was sorry not to meet you there. I saw you when you landed last night, but was so busy that I could not get a chance to speak to you. Had a good time in Australia?”

“Yes, I enjoyed myself,” replied Frank. “Everything was new and strange.”

“I have been aboard your vessel nearly every day since you have been gone, and the foreman tells me that the repairs on her are nearly completed,” added Fowler. “When do you sail?”

“Not under ten days, and it may possibly be two weeks,” answered Frank.

“What are your arrangements, anyhow? I ask because I want to have a chance to visit with you a little before you go.”

Frank did not care to visit with Mr. Fowler, but he could not well refuse to answer his question. “The arrangements, as far as they are made, are these,” he replied. “As soon as the schooner is ready for sea she is to leave the harbor, go around into the river, and come to anchor near Mr. Wilbur’s house.”

“Good!” exclaimed the clerk, settling back in his chair, and slapping his knees. “That will just suit us.”

Frank, somewhat surprised at his enthusiasm, looked at him a moment, and inquired: “Whom do you mean by ‘us?’”

“Oh, a party of our fellows, who may be up there to see you before you leave. Go on. What next?”

“The captain intends to take Mr. Wilbur and his family out for a short excursion,” replied Frank. “We shall be gone three or four days; and if the weather is fair, we may not be back for a week. When we return we shall be ready to start for Natal.”

“All right,” exclaimed the clerk. “Things couldn’t be arranged to suit me better. I suppose you will have all your stores and everything else aboard before you leave the harbor?”

“I suppose so.”

“By the way, who is paymaster of your craft?”

“Walter Gaylord keeps the books and the key of the safe,” answered Frank.

“And you act as sailing master, I think you told me?”

Frank replied that he did.

“You must understand seamanship and navigation, then,” continued Fowler.

“I am no seaman, but I know something about navigation.”

“You have commanded a vessel, haven’t you?”

“Yes, two of them.”

“Were they large ones?”

“One of them was a whaler, and the other was a gunboat.”

“So I was told. Could you take a vessel from here to San Francisco?”

“I think I could,” said Frank, with a smile. “I brought the Stranger from Bellville around the Horn to ’Frisco.”

Fowler nodded his head, and sat looking at the floor for some minutes in silence. “Speaking of your paymaster,” said he, suddenly —“the reason I asked about him, was because I heard some of your crew wishing that he would make haste and come back. They have spent all their money, and want a new supply. I suppose Walter is able to pay them all their dues?”

“Oh, yes,” said Frank.

“I suppose, too, that the contents of that little safe would make you and me rich.”

“I don’t know, I am sure. The captain keeps money enough with him to pay all expenses, but whether or not he has any more on hand, I don’t know. I have never inquired into the matter.”

“I was told that the safe was full of gold,” said Fowler. “I should think that Walter would be afraid to carry the key about with him.”

“I don’t know that he does,” returned Frank. “But even if he did, why should he be afraid?”

"Oh, because there are plenty of men here who would knock him over for one-tenth of the sum he is known to control. Money is everything in this world, isn't it?"

"Some people seem to think so," replied Frank.

"Well, good-by," said the clerk, jumping up. "I may not be able to see you again before you go out to Wilbur's, but I shall surely see you while you are there."

Fowler went away, and Frank was glad to see him go. He did not resume his reading immediately, but sat for a long time looking down at the floor in a brown study. He recalled every word that had passed between himself and the consul's clerk, and somehow he could not rid himself of the impression that the latter had some reasons for questioning him so closely, other than those he had given. Frank remembered what Barton had told him about the inquiries Waters had made in regard to the contents of Uncle Dick's strong box, and he could not help connecting that circumstance with the interview he had just had with the consul's clerk. But when he had done so he laughed at himself.

"What nonsense," he said mentally. "My short acquaintance with Waters and his friends has made me suspicious. Since his attempt to take possession of our vessel, I think that every one who makes inquiries about her has some designs upon her. I'll try to be a little more reasonable."

With this, Frank resumed his reading, and dismissed all thoughts of the consul's clerk and the conversation he had had with him.

On the morning of the next day but one Mr. Wilbur and his big wagon arrived and took Uncle Dick, the Club, and the trappers out to his station. Two days after that the schooner came up the river, and dropped anchor at a short distance from the house. The boys were delighted to see her looking like her old self once more, and as soon as the first boat came off, they went on board in a body to take a good look at her. Uncle Dick's instructions to the workmen had been faithfully obeyed, and the Club could hardly believe that she was the same vessel that had been driven, waterlogged and helpless, upon the shores of that inhospitable island away off in the Pacific. She

looked just as she did on the day she came from the hands of the men who built her.

Shortly after she came to anchor there liberty was granted to the blue jackets, and then there was fun indeed around Mr. Wilbur's house. A sailor always wants to ride when he comes ashore, and there were horses enough on the station to mount every one of them. Among the number were some wild young steeds which had never felt the weight of a saddle, and these were the ones that the blue jackets wanted to ride. Mr. Wilbur cheerfully gave his consent, and the ludicrous attempts at horse-breaking that followed were beyond our power to describe. The owner of the horses and his guests were kept in roars of laughter for hours at a time.

On the second day, to Frank's great disgust, the consul's clerk made his appearance. He was cordially greeted by Mr. Wilbur, who, after shaking him by the hand, turned to present him to the members of the Club. "There's no need to do that," said Fowler. "I know them all, and this gentleman," he added, extending his forefinger to Frank, "I think I can claim as an old acquaintance."

"Then it is all right, and I am glad you have come," said Mr. Wilbur. "I will leave them in your charge to-day, while the captain and I ride into the country to see an old friend of ours who used to be in the mines with us. You are at home here, Gus, and you will understand that my house and everything in it, are at your service and theirs. If those sailors come on shore and ask for horses, give them as many as they want. It will probably be dark long before the captain and I return."

The Club were not at all pleased with this arrangement, but they could not oppose it. They did not like Fowler, and wanted to see as little of him as possible. There was only one thing they could do, and that was to get out of sight and hearing of him. This they did as soon as Uncle Dick and Mr. Wilbur rode away, all except Frank, to whom the consul's clerk stuck like a leech. Frank could not shake him off without being rude, and becoming utterly weary of his company at last, he excused himself, went on board the schooner, and lay down in his bunk. He did not intend to go to sleep, but the book he happened to pick up as he passed through the cabin proved to be

rather dry reading, and before he knew it, he was in the land of dreams.

When he awoke it was with a start, and a presentiment that there was something wrong. As soon as his eyes were open, he saw by the flood of light that streamed in through the open transom over his door, that the lamps in the cabin were burning. Hardly able to believe that he had slept so long, Frank jumped from his bunk, and looked out at the bull's eye. He could see nothing. Even the trees on the bank were concealed by the darkness. Just then the vessel gave a lurch, and laid over in the water as if she were heeling to the pressure of her canvas.

"What does that mean?" thought Frank. "She can't be under way! She certainly is," he added, a moment later, as the schooner began to rise and fall slowly and regularly as if she were passing over the waves. "Where are we going, I wonder?"

Frank turned and laid his hand upon the knob, but the door refused to open for him. He stooped down and looked at the lock, and saw that the bolt was thrown into the catch. He was fastened in. "Archie," he thought (if any trick was played upon him he always laid the blame upon his cousin's shoulders), "if I had you here for a minute, I believe I should be tempted to shake you."

As Archie was not there, Frank shook the door instead, and listened to hear the footsteps of some one coming to release him; but there was no stir in the cabin to indicate that there was anybody there. Beyond a doubt the boys were sitting around the table almost bursting with laughter. Hardly able to refrain from laughing himself, Frank placed one foot on his bunk, laid hold of the lower part of the transom with his hands, and drew himself up until he could look over into the cabin. Yes, there was Archie, sitting in Uncle Dick's easy chair, with his hands in his pockets, and looking up at his cousin in the most unconcerned manner possible. Frank was about to ask what he meant by locking him in after that fashion, when his eye chanced to light on another occupant of the cabin—a man who was seated on the other side of the table, opposite Archie. He was a low-browed, villainous-looking fellow, and in his high top-boots, red shirt, and slouch hat, reminded Frank of the descriptions he had read of robbers, smugglers, and such worthy characters. He sat with his

elbow resting on the table, one hand supporting his chin, and the other grasping a huge revolver, which lay on the table in front of him.

"How are you?" said Archie, hooking his thumbs in the armholes of his vest, and nodding to his cousin.

"What does this mean?" demanded Frank. "Who locked me in here, and why is the schooner underway? Where's Uncle Dick?"

Archie took one thumb out of the armhole of his vest long enough to wave his hand toward the man on the opposite side of the table, and then put it back again.

"You will know all about it in good time," said the man, cheerfully; "and until we want you, you had better stay in there and behave yourself."

"You have taken the schooner, have you?"

"That's the way it looks to us out here. How does it look to you in there?"

While Frank was wondering how he should answer this question, the door opened, and Waters, the convict, and Fowler, the consul's clerk, came into the cabin.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE QUARTER-DECK AGAIN.

Up to this time Frank had been all in the dark, and utterly at a loss to find any explanation for the situation of affairs; but at the sight of these two worthies a sudden light broke in upon him.

“Everything is clear to me now,” thought he. “I know why Fowler had so many questions to ask concerning the contents of Uncle Dick’s strong box, and why he was so particular to inquire into my abilities as a navigator. He is the one we have to thank for this trouble. He is hale fellow well met with these convicts, has assisted them to escape, and expects to get a large share of the money in the safe. Our voyage around the world ends right here, and I am in a lovely scrape besides. These fellows expect me to take them to San Francisco. After I get there what shall I do with the schooner? What will become of Uncle Dick and the rest in the meantime?”

While Frank was turning these knotty questions over in his mind, Fowler and his companion came into the cabin, and closed the door behind them. “Well, Waters, you are off for America once more,” said the consul’s clerk, “and this time I think you are all right. I can’t see what drawbacks you are going to have. There was no war vessel in the harbor when we left.”

“But there was one at Melbourne,” replied Waters, “and it’ll not take long for the commissioners to set her on our track. We must depend on our captain to keep us clear of her. I’m sorry you are here, Archie.”

"So am I," said the latter. "Your man must be a regular blockhead to take me for Walter Gaylord. He looks about as much like me as I look like you."

"Oh, that's the way you came here, is it?" said Frank to himself. "These fellows wanted to catch Walter because he carries the key of the safe, but made a blunder and captured you in his place. This makes twice that Walter has escaped trouble in that way."

"Mistakes will happen," said Waters. "I told Bob here to collar a fellow dressed in black, and wearing a Panama hat; and as you answered that description exactly, he took you in. No matter; we can get along without the key. Some of these days, when we feel in the humor, we'll set Bob at work on the safe with a hammer and cold chisel. He knows how to do such things, and that's why he's here in Tasmania; eh, Bob?"

The man with the revolver grinned his appreciation of the compliment, and Archie said:

"How much do you expect to find when you get into the safe?"

"Oh, enough to make us all rich men in America."

"And how much will you get, Fowler, for your share in this business?"

"Nothing at all," said Waters, before the consul's clerk had time to speak. "He isn't here because he wants to be. We made him come."

"What use will he be to you?"

"Oh, we can use him easy enough. Seeing that the paymaster ain't here, he'll have to act in his place, and get the bills of credit cashed; that is, if we find any."

"That's too attenuated; it's altogether too thin," declared Archie. "He is the ringleader in this business, and I know it. In regard to that strong box, you're going to be disappointed when you see what's in it. You'll be as badly disappointed as the two fellows were whom I met in the Rocky Mountains a few months ago. They captured an emigrant family, and robbed their wagons, expecting to find a million dollars in them; but when they came to break open the box, which they supposed contained the treasure, they found in it nothing

but a little brass model of a machine with which the emigrant intended to run his quartz mill. The million dollars were yet to be made. There's money in the safe, no doubt; but not enough to pay you for the risk you are running, or to make you rich in America or anywhere else. The most of it is in bills of credit, and they will be of about as much use to you as so much paper. No one but Walter can get them cashed."

It made Frank very uneasy to hear his cousin talk to the ruffian in this way, for he fully expected that Waters would become angry, and do him some injury; but the giant took it all in good part, and laughed heartily at the "little man's" impudence. Fowler scowled and looked as black as a thundercloud, but Archie did not seem to notice it.

"I wonder if our captain has woke up yet?" said Waters, glancing toward the door of Frank's stateroom.

"It looks that way in here; how does it look to you out there?" said Frank, repeating the words which the man with the revolver had used in reply to one of his questions. "What's the use of keeping me in here? Hadn't you better open the door, and let me out?"

"Yes, Bob'll let you out," said Waters.

The man at the table put his revolver into one pocket, drew a key from another, and unlocked the door. Frank stepped out into the cabin, and was greeted with—

"Well, captain, you didn't think to see us again so soon, did you?"

"No, I didn't. I was in hopes I had seen the last of you," was the honest reply.

"Oh, I am not such a bad fellow as you may think," said Waters, with a laugh. "I'm as peaceable as a lamb when I ain't riled; and you and your mate here will fare well enough so long as you do as you are told, and don't try any tricks on us. That's something we won't stand from nobody. We're working for our liberty, and we're bound to have it. We've got the schooner now, and we brought you aboard because you are a sailor, and we want you to take us to America."

"I know what your plans are," said Frank.

“Will you help us carry them out?”

“I don’t see how I can avoid it,” replied Frank.

“I don’t either,” said Waters. “We’re the gentlest fellows in the world when you stroke us easy; but when you go against us, we’re a bad lot to have about. We’ll make you captain of the vessel, and our little man here,” he added, pointing to Archie, “we’ll put in for mate. He mustn’t live off our grub for nothing, you know, and we can’t use him in any other way. Will he do?”

“Yes, he’ll do,” said Frank. “But now I want you to understand one thing before we go any further: I don’t claim to be a seaman, and if we are blown out of our course or crippled in any way, you mustn’t blame me for it.”

“Never mind that,” said Waters, quickly. “I know all about you. I know that you were master of a whaler, and that you commanded a Yankee gunboat during the war; so there must be something of the sailor about you. If you will do as well as you can, that’s all I ask, and me and you won’t have no words. Nobody shan’t bother you. You shall do just as you please. The rest of the men can sleep in the forecastle, and us five fellows that’s here now will mess in the cabin, and live like gentlemen.”

“How much of a crew have I?” asked Frank.

“There’s just an even dozen of us on board. There will be ten to do the work.”

“You will be surprised to learn one thing, Frank,” said Archie. “There are four of our own men aboard, and three of them came of their own free will, too. More than that, they helped Fowler and Waters carry out their plan of seizing the vessel.”

“Who are they?” exclaimed Frank.

Archie called over the names of the men, and Frank, astonished beyond measure to learn that any of the Stranger’s crew could be so disloyal, dropped into the nearest chair without speaking. “I suppose you offered them a share of the money you expect to find in the safe, didn’t you?” said he, at length, addressing himself to Fowler.

“All’s fair in war,” replied the consul’s clerk.

"The doctor, who is one of the four, is not in the plot," continued Archie. "He was aboard when these men surprised and captured the vessel, and Waters wouldn't let him go ashore."

"Of course not," said the convict. "We ain't going to starve. There's plenty of good grub on board, and we need a cook to serve it up in shape. Mind you now, captain, no fooling with these men. We won't stand that."

"You need not borrow any trouble on that score," answered Frank, hastily. "I shall not speak to them if I can avoid it. I want nothing to do with such people."

"We couldn't help it," said Waters. "We couldn't undertake so long a voyage with a crew of landsmen, for we needed somebody to steer the vessel and go aloft. These men wanted money, and were ready to join with us, so we took them. If you're satisfied with everything, captain, you might as well go on deck and take charge."

"Of course I am not satisfied," answered Frank, "but I don't see that anything better can be done under the circumstances. What shall I do if my crew refuse to obey my orders?"

"Oh, they'll obey your orders. Just show me the man that don't start when he's spoke to, and I'll show you somebody who will hurt himself against these bones," said Waters, doubling up his huge fist and flourishing it above his head. "I ain't a sailor, but I'm a bully overseer, and I'll keep the men straight, I bet you. Me and Bob, one of us, will be on deck all the time, to see that things go on smooth and easy, like they had oughter do. We are working for liberty, mind you, and we can't have no foolishness from nobody. Everything depends on you, captain, and it may comfort you to know that we'll have our eyes on you night and day. You can't make a move that we won't see."

"I am glad you told me," said Frank. "I always like to know what I have to expect. Let's go on deck and set the watch, Archie."

The captain and his mate ascended the ladder closely followed by Waters. As Frank stepped upon the deck he looked about him with some curiosity. He wanted to see the men who were so lost to all sense of honor, that they could be induced to betray their trust for money. He glanced toward the wheel, and saw that it was in the

hands of one who, next to Freas and Barton, Uncle Dick had always regarded as his most faithful and trusty hand. This proved to Frank's satisfaction the truth of the old adage, that you must summer and winter a man before you know him; in other words, you must see him in all manners of situations, and in all sorts of temptations, before you can say that you are really acquainted with him. It proved, too, that Uncle Dick knew what he was talking about when he said that a sailor was never satisfied. Give him a brownstone front to live in, and a hundred dollars a month to spend, and he will grumble because he doesn't live in a palace and get two hundred. The man hung his head when Frank looked at him. He could not meet the young captain's gaze.

Having satisfied his curiosity on this point, Frank looked about him to note the position of the schooner. He told himself that he must have slept very soundly indeed, for she had probably been under way an hour or more before he awoke. She was already a long distance from the shore, and the lighthouse at the entrance of the harbor was fast disappearing in the darkness. The only thing he could do that night was to make an offing, and the next day, as soon as he could take an observation, he would work out a course and fill away for the States. He would do the best he could, too. He would perform his duty as faithfully as though the schooner was his own property, and he and the rest of her company were bound on a pleasure excursion. This much he had made up his mind to, and he had done it simply because Archie was on board. Of course, if Waters and the rest should relax their vigilance after a few days, and give him an opportunity to assume control of the vessel, he would promptly seize upon it, provided he was satisfied that his efforts would result in complete success; but he would take no chance whatever. He had seen what the giant was when he became fairly aroused, and he would be very careful not to incur his displeasure. Waters knew that Archie was his cousin; he had been on board the Stranger long enough to learn a good deal of the history of the occupants of the cabin, and if he became angry at Frank, Archie would be sure to suffer. The young captain wished most heartily that his cousin was safe ashore with the rest of the Club. He would have felt much more at his ease.

"Muster the crew, Archie, and divide them into two watches," said Frank. "Send the port watch below, and then go below yourself and try to get a wink of sleep. Our force is so small that we'll have to stand watch and watch; and as there are only three men able to manage the wheel, you and I will have to take a hand at it now and then. Do you think you can do it?"

Archie was quite sure he could. He was in new business now, but the way he went about the execution of his cousin's command showed that he had kept his eyes and ears open. He ordered the foremast hands around like any old mate, and they obeyed as promptly and silently as though they had all been trained sailors. The men belonging to the Stranger's crew hung their heads, and would not look at him, and Archie, on his part, acted as though he did not recognize them.

"Couldn't you make her go a little faster, captain?" asked Waters, who kept close at Frank's side all the while. "We're working for liberty, you know, and we don't want to waste no time."

"You'll go faster presently," answered Frank. "The breeze is freshening, and she's got as much on now as she can stand. You must remember that we have only three men to work the topsails, and I don't want to run any risks. If you will let me manage matters my own way I will get you along just as fast as I can."

Waters seemed satisfied with this assurance, and never again offered advice. He kept Frank company during his watch, and although the latter at first would have been very glad to be rid of his presence, he finally became interested in his conversation, and after a little urging induced him to tell how it was that he had been able to escape from the island four different times, and who had first put it into his head to seize the Stranger. The sequel proved that Uncle Dick had not been mistaken when he hinted that gold would control the police. Waters and all his companions who were then on board the Stranger had been tried and transported for the same offence. One of them—the convict who was keeping guard over Archie when Frank awoke, and whom he had heard addressed as Bob—was a ticket-of-leave man, who had made considerable money by hauling goods from Melbourne to the Bendigo mines. Instead of taking care of himself he stood by his friends, and it was his gold that had so often released

Waters from the chain-gang, and started him on his way to England and America. It was his gold, too, that had made a friend of the consul's clerk. The latter knew all about the vessels that were preparing to sail, and when the convicts were ready to make an attempt at escape he would select a ship for them, and assist them in getting on board. Three times Waters and his friends had gone aboard as gentlemen, paid their passage, and messed in the cabin; but twice they had been overtaken and carried back by a war vessel, and once the captain of their ship found out, by some means, who they were; secured them all by stratagem and carried them back where they came from. Their last attempt was made on the Sea Gull. Assisted by Fowler, they shipped on board of her before the mast, and would in all probability have succeeded in reaching their destination, had it not been for the gale which wrecked their vessel, and threw Waters and his three friends into the company of the Stranger's crew.

It was Waters himself who first conceived the idea of seizing the schooner. He found opportunity to talk to Fowler about it, and the latter was the one who made all the arrangements. Visiting the schooner every day while she was in the dry-docks, he selected three of the sailors whom he thought he could induce to lend their assistance, and the result proved that he had not been mistaken in his men. Every one of them had seen the inside of the strong box, for Walter always called the crew into the cabin when he paid them any money, and they declared that it was full to the brim with English gold pieces.

Up to this time Fowler and Bob, the ticket-of-leave man, had no intention of joining the convicts in their attempt to leave the island. The consul's clerk held an honorable position which he was in no hurry to throw up, while Bob was coining money at his vocation, and was satisfied to remain where he was, for the present at least. His pardon was only a conditional one, and if detected in an attempt at escape, he would be deprived of his liberty and sent back to the penal settlement again. He did not want to go there; but when he learned through Fowler that there was an opportunity for him to make a fortune without work, he determined to assist the others in seizing the Stranger and take all the chances.

By questioning Frank, the consul's clerk found out just what Uncle Dick intended to do as soon as the repairs on his vessel were completed, and this information was in due time conveyed to Waters. Preparations were made accordingly; and on the night of the second day after the Stranger entered the river and came to anchor near Mr. Wilbur's house, Waters and his companions quietly unlocked their irons and betook themselves to the bush. Fowler was already on the ground. He stuck to Frank until he drove him on board the schooner and into his bunk, and then he set to work to clear the way for the convicts, so that they would have little or no trouble in boarding the vessel. He mingled freely with the sailors who were ashore, and by giving them a glowing description of a wonderful horse-race that was to come off that afternoon at a station a few miles distant, he induced them to apply to Mr. Baldwin for liberty until twelve o'clock that night, which was granted. Fowler exerted himself to supply the blue jackets with all the horses they needed, and having seen them fairly started on their wild-goose chase, he turned his attention to the first mate, whom he tried to induce to remain ashore all night. But in this he failed. The officer knew that his place was on board his vessel, and on board his vessel he went as soon as it began to grow dark.

About nine o'clock that evening Waters and his companions arrived, and concealed themselves among the bushes on the bank opposite the spot where the schooner lay at anchor. Fowler visited them shortly afterward to tell them how their plans were working. After listening to his report the ticket-of-leave man stole off into the woods to carry out a particular part of the programme that had been assigned to him, while the other four entered the water and swam silently off to the vessel, which they boarded without opposition. The two mates, and the few foremast hands who remained on board, were quickly mustered on deck and held passive by loaded revolvers, which two of the convicts kept pointed at their heads, while Waters and another proceeded to tie them hand and foot. This being done, they were each gagged to prevent them from raising an alarm, and then one of the boats was lowered, and the helpless men were taken ashore and laid in the bushes. All this work was performed so silently that Frank was not awakened. The convicts saw him asleep in his

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